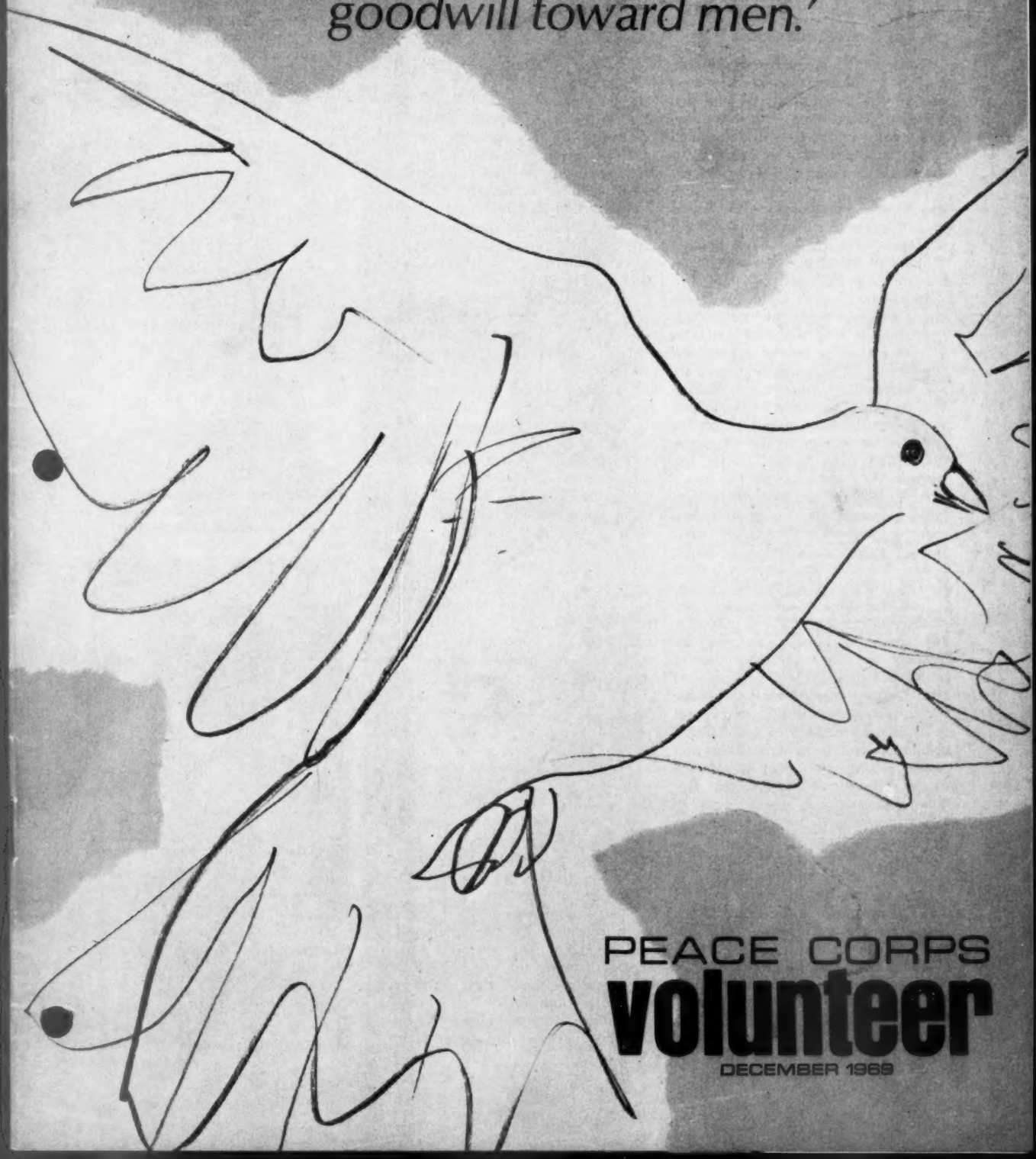
That we may achieve in our time
and for all time
the ancient vision of 'peace on earth
goodwill toward men.'



PEACE CORPS

volunteer

DECEMBER 1969

Volunteers join moratorium with petitions, vigils

You couldn't generalize in describing how Peace Corps Volunteers around the world observed the first Vietnam Moratorium Day. Activism and apathy, both were evidenced, and also a reticence born of concern for the Peace Corps' apolitical chastity.

In Guyana, four Volunteers met with the American ambassador to deliver an anti-war petition; in Kenya, a group of 20 was received. In La Paz, Bolivia, Volunteers joined in a silent vigil before the U.S. Embassy.

In Ankara, Turkey, about 25 Volunteers, joined by others including three Peace Corps staff members and two Air Force doctors, held a vigil on embassy grounds, and a delegation of six was received by Ambassador William Handley. In El Salvador, 37 Volunteers wrote a letter to President Nixon "to register our outrage at the continuation of the Vietnam war," giving the letter to their ambassador.

In Colombia, correspondent Scott James estimated that about 40 Volunteers joined with American "year abroad" students and others to march before the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá for two hours, carrying anti-war signs.

In Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, Volunteers bought advertising space in local newspapers to publicly denounce the war. Signed by 25 Volunteers, the Ecuadorian ad said: "As representatives of the Peace Corps, an organ of the United States government dedicated to peaceful development and to understanding and peace among the peoples of the world, we criticize the fact that this same government is supporting such a destructive and hateful action as the war in Vietnam."

Similar in tone, the Dominican ad, signed by 38 Volunteers, said: "As citizens of the United States and individual members of the Peace Corps here, we wish to express our solidarity with the peoples of the United States, of the Dominican Republic, and of other nations who deplore this unjust and irrational war and who are striving to attain peace."

Justifying this, Dominican Volunteer Warren Montgomery told THE VOLUNTEER that "it helps to negate the government's use of Peace Corps for propaganda purposes. By publicly declaring to host country nationals that we are in opposition to the Vietnam policy, we no longer remain showcase examples of idealistic, well-intentioned American youth who nevertheless work for the American government. Instead, by protesting, we morally disassociate ourselves from that government and its war policies."

In Washington, Director Joe Blatchford kept his cool. Briefing country directors by letter, Blatchford said "Many people are asking me . . . what is our policy after the Oct. 15 moratorium regarding freedom of expression. The answer is that the policy is the same as it was before–a policy which recognizes both basic individual freedoms and the need of the Peace Corps to remain apolitical."

Emphasizing that he was giving them wide latitude to handle situations as best they saw fit in their individual countries, Blatchford counseled the directors to "maintain free and open lines of communication with the Volunteers regarding their proposed actions . . . so that you will have the opportunity to discuss with them the questions of judgment and sensitivity that are involved.

"In addition," said the director, "you may wish to explore with them possible courses of action which clearly would involve no detriment to our apolitical posture. A good illustration of what can be achieved with this approach is what occurred at some posts where, in connection with the Oct. 15 moratorium, groups of Volunteers went to the U.S. embassies to present petitions expressing their views on Vietnam.

"The Volunteers and their petitions were received by the ambassadors and together they discussed the issues concerning the war. The Volunteers thus registered their unity with the moratorium without offending local sensibilities or endangering relationships between the governments."

Several weeks earlier, in a speech to the Washington Council of the Experiment in International Living, Blatchford touched on the same topic –the Volunteer's freedom of speech.

"The effectiveness with which he can do his job has always been the paramount consideration in questions of freedom of speech among Peace Corps Volunteers," the director said. "It will remain so. When a situation arises in which the issue of free expression is raised, then a judgment will be made upon the individual merits of the case. A fair hearing and due process will be guaranteed to all involved.

"The errors that have been made in the past cannot bind us now," Blatchford added. To make it clear that he was referring to the case of former Chile Volunteer Bruce Murray, now before a Rhode Island district court, the director noted that "40,000 Americans have served in the Peace Corps in the eight years of its history, and in those years only one case involving these issues has come before the courts. Senator Fulbright

Sherri Lynn Hartwell, wife of a Colombia regional director, carries her son and a sign in front of the American Embassy, Bogotá. Ambassador (and ex-Peace Corps director) Jack Vaughn, however, was in Washington on business.

Photo by El Tiempo

has said that isn't 'too bad a record'."

In some countries where Volunteers serve, the whole "free speech" issue seemed a bit irrelevant.

Writing from the South Pacific, correspondent Joella Bisson reported: "As to activity by Volunteers here in the Kingdom of Tonga, we had none . . . except one Volunteer did wear a black arm band."

In Thailand, correspondent Mike Schmuecker noted that "if one letter to the ambassador is a moratorium, then we had one. Otherwise, Oct. 15 was just another day."

Three days before the moratorium, nine TEFL Volunteers in Bangkok met to plan some group action. "There were a million hang-ups," one of them explained. "Thailand is really strange. It's a hell of a place to hold a demonstration; dissent and demonstrations are alien concepts here. If you protest the war, they think you're attacking Thailand. And if that happens, what happens to your effectiveness here?"

Most of the nine, reported Schmuecker, eventually did something. One wore an armband to school that day, and another threw away his regular lesson plan and talked with the students about the war and his feelings against it.

Summed up one Volunteer there: "You know, I was closer to Vietnam and the war when I was 12,000 miles away back in the States. Now I'm so close I can hear the B52s take off for a strike; but psychologically, man, we're out of it—a million miles away."

US, PC - Libya

Libya pulls the plug on 'model' program

On the surface the Peace Corps effort in Libya was a flawless model of binationalism. Consider:

¶ Volunteers were directly under contract to the Libyan Ministry of Education to serve as English teachers;

¶ The Libyan government paid their $168 a month living allowance—and also furnished housing (or an additional $70 monthly), gave Volunteers a generous "settling in" allowance and even provided the Peace Corps with 80 motorbikes;

¶ The small Peace Corps staff there was "integrated," with the appointment of Mehdi Fathalla, on loan from the Ministry of Education, as administrative assistant;

¶ And finally, in four years, more than a hundred Libyan teachers had helped the Peace Corps train Libya-bound Volunteers, teaching Arabic and cultural studies while they themselves learned English.

On Oct. 30, Peace Corps/Libya officially folded up, as Director Ed White got on a plane. The 144 Libya Volunteers had left earlier in the month, incidental victims of a coup d'état.

Most Libya Volunteers weren't even there Sept. 1, when the country's monarchy was toppled by a group of army officers. Taking advantage of summer school break, 88 were vacationing in Africa and Europe; a dozen were in the U.S. helping train another TEFL contingent.

Patrick Hilliard, ex - VOLUNTEER correspondent, was in Rome.

"I was looking at the *Herald-Tribune,*" he recalled; "Rocky Marciano had been killed. Then I saw this picture of King Idris. My first thoughts were that the old man had died."

As did Volunteers in a number of capitals, Hilliard checked in at the American Embassy. At that moment only Libyan nationals could get back into Libya, so arrangements were made through the State Department to issue *per diem* to stranded Volunteers, giving many their first taste of Europe on more than $5 a day.

Hilliard finally got back to Tripoli Sept. 19, the day after Premier Al-Maghrabi (literally, "the western one") had held a press conference to announce, among other things, that Libyan grade school students would henceforth study only Arabic—no English.

No primary school English meant no Peace Corps. About 85 per cent of the Volunteers taught fifth and sixth grade English; the rest worked in teacher training, or had supervisory roles as assistant inspectors. The only Volunteers not in the program were the three Peace Corps secretaries.

When the first group of 18 TEFL teachers arrived in 1966, English was on the rise in Libya. By making it an important (12 hours a week) pedagogical chunk of fifth and sixth grade, then continuing in secondary, the Ministry of Education perhaps felt it had found a shortcut to assimilating Western technology; and the call had gone out for contract English teachers: Egyptians, Jordanians, Sudanese . . . and Peace Corps Volunteers.

Each Peace Corps TEFL teacher, upon completing training, received an individual ministry contract. "We had one of the purest of all relationships," says Willard Whitman, country director until last June. "We were there truly at the desire and follow-

PEACE CORPS
volunteer

Volume VII **Number 13**
December, 1969

PAGE
5 **South Pacific photo essay**
Scenes from Tonga, Western Samoa, Fiji
14 **Living Poor**
by Moritz Thomsen

ON THE COVER: Quotation from undelivered speech of John F. Kennedy, Nov. 23, 1963.

Published monthly by the Peace Corps
Washington, D.C. 20525

Judy Thelen, editor; Steve Prindle, associate editor; Lynn Hennessey, editorial assistant. Design by Paul Reed.

Correspondents: **AFGHANISTAN:** Don C. Yager. **BRAZIL:** Mike McCullough. **BRITISH HONDURAS:** Lon Hanke. **CHILE:** Charles Smith, Jr. **COLOMBIA:** Scott James. **COSTA RICA:** Bill Barrett. **ECUADOR:** Charles Creesy. **FIJI:** David Downes. **GHANA:** Lawrence Grobel. **GUYANA:** Paul Richard. **INDIA:** Jonathan Lipsky. **IRAN:** David Hoovler. **IVORY COAST:** William P. Carpenter. **KENYA:** Berne Ellenson. **KOREA:** Aaron Gurwitz. **LESOTHO:** Stephen Lehmann. **MALAWI:** T. D. McCloskey, Jr., John Shannon. **MALAYSIA:** Sharon Clarke Oudemool. **MICRONESIA:** Chuck Freedman. **MOROCCO:** Kenneth Agata, Roberta Prees. **NEPAL:** Jonathan Fox. **NICARAGUA:** Eugene Patterson. **NIGERIA:** Bob Larson. **PARAGUAY:** Suzanne Tingley. **PERU:** Lucy Conger, Karl Lorenz. **SWAZILAND:** Mike Ascolese. **THAILAND:** Mike Schmuecker. **TONGA:** Joella Bisson. **URUGUAY:** William Purdy. **VENEZUELA:** Edward Thiele.

ing the wishes of the government of Libya."

In many ways these TEFL Volunteers were contract teachers first and Volunteers second. "It wasn't really well known that we were Peace Corps," says Hilliard. "We were there to teach English."

On Sept. 18, Hilliard and his fellow teachers lost their contracts. Since the Libyan government did not plan to curtail English instruction in secondary school, the Peace Corps made overtures to switch some TEFL teachers to that level. Response from the Libyans: a polite "no thanks."

Director Joe Blatchford, who chose Libya as one of three countries to visit on his first and so far only trip to the field last May, had this to say:

"We can understand the decision of the government of Libya to place stronger emphasis on the teaching of Arabic, their national language, in preference to English. Peace Corps Volunteers will leave, as we came, according to the wishes of the people and government of Libya.

"During the short time I was there," added Blatchford, "I met and came to admire a number of Libyans with whom Volunteers worked. Certainly the Volunteers and staff members who were privileged to help Libya in her development leave many good friends behind."

In leaving, Libya Volunteers had many differing destinations. Some 35 simply terminated early; 22 took advantage of a special placement offer with the Teacher Corps. Some transferred to other Peace Corps countries (chiefly Iran and Tunisia) to continue TEFL teaching, or made plans to train for programs as dissimilar as Nepal math/science and Nicaragua agriculture.

In Bisbee, Ariz., and Salt Lake City 180 Libya-bound trainees also suddenly found themselves without a host country. Again, TEFL programs in other countries absorbed some (20 to Korea, 11 to Thailand). The Teacher Corps threw Peace Corps another life line, taking 24 for a special program in Atlanta for a year—with the understanding that they will be automatically invited to train for a Tunisia TEFL program next summer. It was Turkey, Guatemala, Ceylon, Afghanistan, etc., for still more trainees; many are still searching for a "slot."

"No one just wants to quit," said Libya deskman Dick Jeanneret.

In Malawi, bad news from Banda...

The Peace Corps is on notice to pull out of the east-central African country of Malawi, where 168 Volunteers are currently serving as teachers, community development agents and rural health workers.

Meeting in September, the ruling Congress Party of President H. Kamuzu Banda passed, among 11 resolutions, one stating "that for some time now there have been complaints by our people against the influence which the Peace Corps Volunteers have over our children because of their bad conduct and behavior, and their slovenliness.

"The conference, thereupon, resolved: that the recruitment of Peace Corps Volunteers be stopped forthwith; and that those Peace Corps Volunteers who are already here be replaced within the next 18 months."

By "replaced," it is assumed the resolution meant Malawians would step in. Some have speculated that Malawi wants additional British "VSO" volunteers; but Dr. Banda is understood to be concerned with their attire and hair length, also. Another possibility is that more South African contract teachers would be hired.

Volunteers have served in Malawi since 1963. Surprised by the Congress Party action, Peace Corps Africa region staff men could offer little comment. While conceding that Volunteer teachers at times dressed too informally for the *mileu* of what until recently was a British colonial school system, area chief Del Lewis said "Volunteer teachers have always followed the dictates of their Malawian supervisors."

Considering the harsh tone of the resolution passed, Malawi government officials have been most cordial. Told that the 18 month cut-off date would mean early termination for 48 secondary education teachers just completing in-country training, Ministry of Education officials in Blantyre said that this group could stay its full 24 months. Malawi officials, too, expressed continuing interest in a now-shelved Volunteer public works program.

...while Mauritius asks for aid

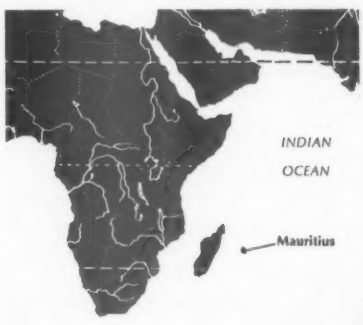
Volunteers are going to Mauritius, an island dot in the Indian Ocean 1,000 miles east of the African mainland. A small group of ag extension agents will begin training next spring, possibly in the Virgin Islands.

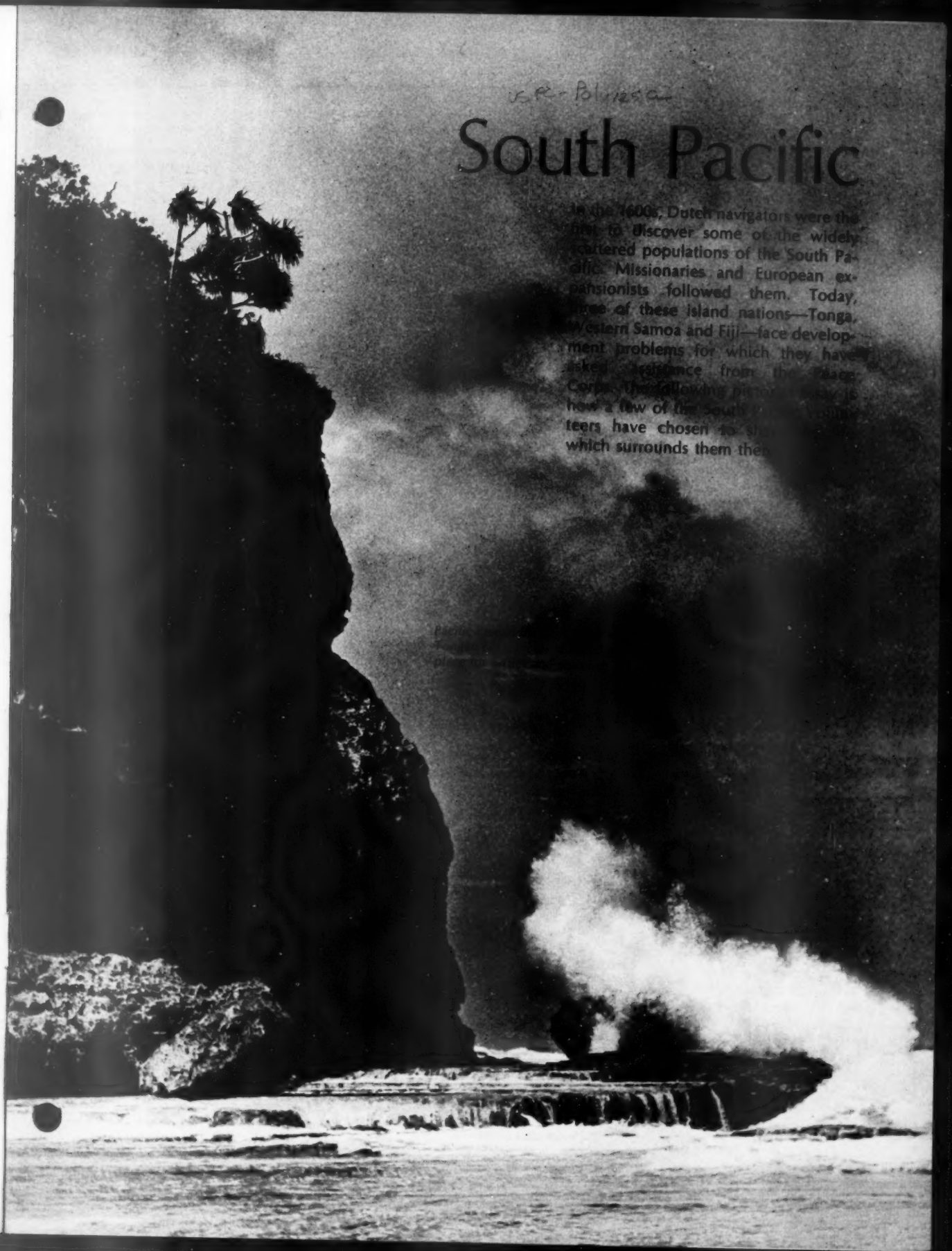
At present, Peace Corps/Mauritius is being run out of a hotel room in Port Louis by Byron Caldwell, former Malawi director taking on a new post.

Known as the "star and key" of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius received its independence in March, 1968, after centuries of colonial subservience to, in turn, Arabs, Malays, the Portuguese, Dutch, French and English. While both French and English are spoken, a more common language is Creole Patois, used by slaves brought to the island from Madagascar.

Almost 50 per cent of Mauritius' 800,000 people are Hindu—descendents of indentured Indian laborers brought in to work in the sugar fields. The island, in fact, is one large sugar plantation; 40 per cent of the land is devoted to cane, and sugar and molasses account for 98 per cent of exports.

Understandably, the Mauritian government wants more agricultural diversity. Also needed is simply more foodstuffs, since the population is growing at 3.4 per cent, doubling in 20 years.





South Pacific

In the 1600s, Dutch navigators were the first to discover some of the widely scattered populations of the South Pacific. Missionaries and European expansionists followed them. Today, three of these island nations—Tonga, Western Samoa and Fiji—face development problems for which they have asked assistance from the Peace Corps. The following pictures show how a few of the Volunteers have chosen to share the beauty which surrounds them there.

Three-wheeled, motocycle-powered vehicles such as this "Kapeta Taxi" are the most common form of public transportation on Tongatapu.

This boy comes from Navatoka, a village on Tonga's main island.

TONGA

Although they have some 20,000 square miles to roam in the South Pacific, more than 60 per cent of the Tongan people live on one island — Tongatapu — less than 70 square miles itself. It is here these islanders of Polynesian lineage (82,000 of them) have established their capital city, Nuku'alofa. Since 97 per cent of the Tongans have no regular income and half the population is under 16, family planning and agricultural development are priority items for the government. (While still militarily and financially dependent on the United Kingdom, Tonga is governed by its own Parliament). Peace Corps Volunteers have worked here since October, 1967, principally in education, health and agriculture. The Tongan photos, with one exception, are by former Volunteer **Dennis Barloga,** a secondary school English teacher. The "Kapeta taxi" was photographed by former Volunteer **Tom Karlow,** a primary school teacher.

Girl from Ha'asini, on the main island of Tongatapu.

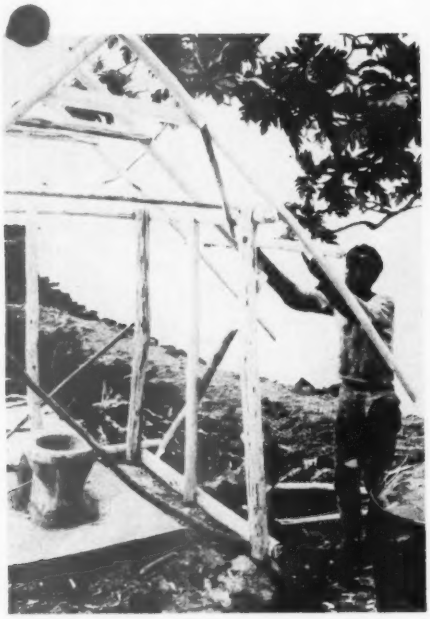
In his first official function, 21-year-old crown prince of Tonga, Tupou To'a, leads the royal guard to greet his father on the latter's return from a trip to Europe.

Women of the Muku'alofa marketplace while away the time between sales of Tonga oil, a homemade beauty product of coconut oil and crushed flowers.

A patient wait at the bus stop while renovation goes on behind to make room for the Treasury Department in the capital city of Apia.

WESTERN SAMOA

Apia is the capital, commercial center and only city in the independent state of Western Samoa, northwest of Tonga. The state dates from 1962, after more than a half-century as a colony of Germany and Trust Territory under New Zealand. The majority of its 131,000 citizens are indigenous Polynesians of pure or nearly pure Samoan ancestry. With the population increasing by 3.9 per cent a year, Western Samoa has requested help to strengthen its economy and improve standards of health and education. Peace Corps Volunteers first came here in September, 1967, and have helped in those areas, although specialists such as engineers, architects and business managers have found their services needed also. The photographer for this section was former Volunteer **Don Paxton** who worked in tuberculosis detection, general sanitation and public health.



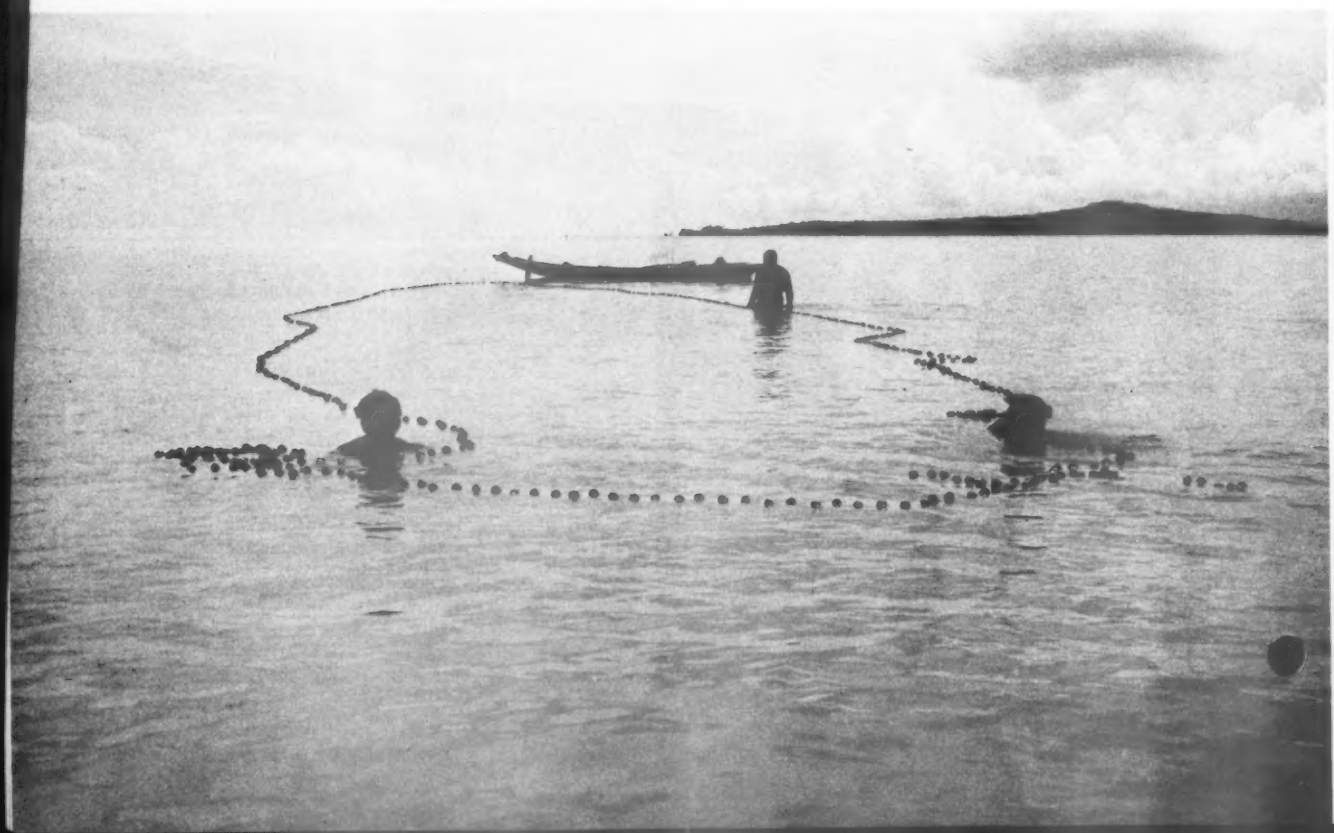
Samoan counterpart to Volunteers in village of Samatau begins the framework for a waterseal toilet. The house, slab and bowl can be moved to a new site when necessary.

A village chief, with a U.S. Marine issue belt and his right arm swollen with elephantiasis, waits his turn to speak during ceremonies. He can speak German which he learned during German occupation of Samoa in the early part of this century.

With flower girls leading, the groom shelters his bride with a white umbrella as they pass by the band during a traditional Christian wedding ceremony.

Samoan women and children gather on the beach to fill buckets with water from fresh springs which are uncovered during low tide.

Because some fishermen have ravaged the lagoon with dynamite, the catch these net tenders are awaiting is likely to be sparse. While dynamite can result in a good catch at the moment, it kills the young fish and destroys coral feeding grounds.



With their instructor admiring the rugby practice, one defense player gets set at the right and another attempts to tackle his goal-minded classmate.

FIJI

Similar to the population patterns on Tonga and Western Samoa, 70 per cent of the people of Fiji live on just one of their 320 islands—Viti Levu, where the capital, Suva, is located. Indigenous Fijians are classed as Melanesians; but over the years Indians were imported to work in the sugar fields to the extent that today they comprise 50 per cent of Fiji's half million population. The islands are a British colony with a governor appointed by the Queen. Overly dependent on a sugar economy, Fiji receives partial income from tourism and the export of coconut oil and unrefined gold, but far below the minimum requirements for development. Accordingly, the Fijian government has begun a diversification program concentrating on fisheries, forestry, coconut products and cooperatives. Peace Corps Volunteers have worked in these projects and in teaching since January, 1968. Correspondent **David Downes** submitted the accompanying photographs which were taken by former Volunteer **Richard Tauber,** now a free-lance photographer in San Francisco. Richard and his wife Dorothy served as teachers in Savusavu on Fiji's second largest island.

Youngsters, predominantly of Indian lineage, queue up to have their Fijian teacher review their school work.

Last year when for the first time in history a cruise ship called at Savusavu, the Australian tourists on board joined in the Fijian dances.

Women and their small boys walk to market in the shade of lush growth along the airport road near Savusavu.

In a Waikiki beach shirt, a wishful young Fijian inspects a dream in a Savusavu department store.

THIRD EXCERPT

Living Poor

Story and Sketches by Moritz Thomsen

What follows is the third and final excerpt from Moritz Thomsen's book and represents the fourth year—1968—he spent in the Peace Corps.

In this segment, in the Ecuadorian village of Río Verde, he is by now relatively well accepted as an agricultural Volunteer and fully experiences the high points of life with his neighbors as well as the dark hours of frustration and failure.

Earlier in the book (October VOLUNTEER) he describes how he came to be assigned to this forgotten stretch of beach and introduces those who become the main characters in his life there—Ramón, the young fisherman so

The co-op about this time was beginning to divide into two groups. The "rich" *socios,* working faithfully, had begun to accumulate three and four times as many hours of work as the "poor" ones. Any co-op profits would be divided according to the number of hours each member had worked, and I had been warning everyone that it was quite possible that three or four *socios* would end up controlling everything.

I was pushing them shamelessly, sulking when they promised to work and then didn't show up, getting mad at them when they quit early, pleading the case, giving them long, boring talks on the necessity of suffering. Now, sacrificing Now. I was like a one-man symphony orchestra; when the flutes and violins didn't work, I was blaring trumpets and percussion. I tried to shame them or inspire them or obligate them in some way to cut down 50 acres of jungle. As I think back on that time, it occurs to me that they must all have thought I was quite mad.

There was hardly anything to eat in the town, and we were caught up in a monumental lethargy. The Italian priests who dominated the religious life of Esmeraldas sent a fresh, plump brother out to take charge of the mission in Palestina. He had little money and to a large degree depended on the goodness of his parish; he lasted about four months. And when he was recalled, he had lost about 40 pounds and a good deal of his vocational calling. It wasn't that the people didn't want to feed him; it was simply that there was nothing to share, and many of the people were filled with shame and humiliation when the brother, vacant-eyed and ribs jutting, left the town.

It was the bananas that saved my life. When it was possible to buy them, I could generally manage to move around, but it meant eating bananas all day. Trying to set an example, I was clearing land on a daily schedule, and it became a fascinating problem in internal combustion to stuff bananas into myself and see how far I could go. Two bananas would get me up the hill to the farm; five bananas would fuel me up for forty or fifty minutes of low-keyed work; one banana would get me down the hill again to the Pepsi Colas and the animal crackers. When I went to work mornings, I had bananas stuffed into every pocket, pants and shirt, the precise number counted out beforehand. Sixteen bananas would carry me through to noon if I didn't work too fast or if the hordes

From the book *Living Poor* by Moritz Thomsen. Copyright © 1969 by the University of Washington Press. If not available at local bookstores, copies may be ordered at $6.95 from the publisher: University of Washington Press, Seattle, Wash., 98105.

anxious to trust the gringo; [illegible]xandro, who offered Moritz his [illegible]als; Wai, wildly independent, the physical pride of the town; Señora Pancha, who bartered her gold flakes for a sewing machine; Don Julio, head of the town council, and Alvaro, the storekeeper.

After his first extension, Moritz developed a love-hate relationship with Río Verde (November VOLUNTEER), not wanting to leave, yet finding himself cursing the lethargy of the people, the degradation of their poverty and his own inability to do much about it. A functioning cooperative was one hope; yet to reach the people with the concept of cooperation, to transmit the idea that union would be the only way they could have any force and be able to dominate their poverty, was a monumental assignment.

But a co-op was formed, and for all its birth pains Ramón at one point told Moritz that success was just around the corner. And the day the *Cooperativa de Río Verde* soccer team defeated some ununiformed opponents from up the river was such a spiritual lift for the members that success, in a business sense, did seem possible.

Moritz had been "living poor" in the United States all his adult life, yet he had lessons to learn about what this truly meant in a country such as Ecuador. The long siestas, the dazed, indifferent looks of the *campesinos*—these ceased to be the tourist's stereotyped impression for him. And by his fourth year there, he had identified these signs not as laziness but the manifestation of physical and moral exhaustion.

"Some benevolent ignorance," Moritz writes, "denies a poor man the ability to see the squalid sequence of his life, except very rarely; he views it rather as a disconnected string of unfortunate sadnesses." And Moritz knew that to talk to a man of tripling his income to $300 a year, to ask his loyalty to something larger than a family unit—the cooperative, for example—was to fill a man with confusion.

of sons and grandsons of Sebastián Bagui didn't shatter all my plans with their hungry cries as I passed the last house on the street.

But being hungry wasn't simply losing my energy and reaching a moment about 11 o'clock in the morning when I ran out of energy and had to sit down every 5 minutes to plan the next move, like a mountain climber at 18,000 feet. There was also a growing mental depression, a gray fog of hopelessness that grew in my head each day; I could feel myself getting stupider. Things became incomprehensible and irritating.

Afternoons I usually stayed in the house and either slept or just sat on a stool staring out the window at the ocean. I lay on the bed and between naps read a book called *The Economics of Subsistence Agriculture* in five- minute periods of comparative concentration. Slowly I came to realize that the author was writing about us in Río Verde when he said that a majority of all the farmers in the world—perhaps 90 per cent of the self-employed farmers in Africa, Asia, and South America—their caloric intake limited to a bare subsistence level, worked no more than three or four hours a day. There is only so much energy in a dish of rice and a piece of fish. There are just so many miles to a gallon of bananas—not one more.

I don't know why reading this in a book gave me such satisfaction, seeing it all spelled out in graphs and statistics, but it came to me as a revelation, this terrible truth that I had known since arriving in Río Verde. And seeing it written down wiped away my last lingering feelings that Ramón and his two-hour naps after lunch, or Wilfrido sitting on a box all day in the shadow of his house without moving, or all those hundreds of men whose faces I had seen looking out the windows of little bamboo farmhouses up and down the river through those long afternoons were manifestations of laziness. No, they were manifestations of exhaustion, in the case of Wilfrido—an old man fading and aging before our eyes—a moral exhaustion so consuming that he had to fight the impulse to kill himself. I was making $100 a month. My hunger was in varying degrees experimental and masochistic, and resulted from laziness, bad planning and affectation. I was like a six-year-old kid playing doctor; I just wanted to see what it was like.

But projecting my own lethargy, exhaustion, and mental depression onto my friends, who weren't playing and who went through this seasonal hunger every year of their lives, I began to see in them such qualities of heroism and endurance, such a wild and savage strength, that it about broke my heart with pride for them.

Poverty isn't just hunger; it is many interlocking things—ignorance and exhaustion, underproduction, disease and fear. It is glutted export markets, sharp, unscrupulous middlemen, a lack of knowledge about the fundamental aspects

of agriculture. It is the witchcraft of your grandfather spreading its values on your life. It is a dozen irrational Latin qualities, like your fear of making more of your life than your neighbor and thereby gaining his contempt for being overly ambitious.

There is no single way to smash out and be freed. A man has to break out in a dozen places at once. Most important, perhaps, he should start breaking out before he is six years old, for by then a typical child of poverty in a tropical nation is probably crippled by protein starvation, his brain dulled and his insides eaten up by worms and amoebas. No, more brutally true: If he is a typical child, an average child, by six he is dead.

To work harder a man has to eat better; to eat better he has to produce more; to produce more he has to work harder. And all of this is predicated on a growing knowledge of nutrition, basic hygiene, and the causes of the diseases that ravage his body; an understanding of agriculture and a respect for new farming techniques, new seeds, new ways to plant, new fertilizers, new crops.

Craziest and most interesting is the problem of incentive. Many of the people in Río Verde, for instance, aside from wanting more food, prettier clothes, and the money for doctors when they needed it, couldn't think of any good reason for not being poor. They didn't want anything. Perhaps a radio, perhaps a horse. To talk to a man about tripling his income to $300 a year was to fill him with confusion; he got nervous; he started to laugh; he wanted to go get drunk. The poor man from the moment of his birth was so inundated with problems, so deprived, that to end up wanting things was a form of insanity. What he wanted was to stay alive another day to tell jokes and visit with his friends in the sweet night air; he wanted new pants for the fifth of August fiesta, another pair at Christmas, and a house full of food for the Easter *Semana Santa;* he wanted 10 *sucres* from time to time so that he could drink and dance and feel cleansed of life. Ramón with his composition roof was *egoísto,* the maverick; roofing a house with Eternit that would collect rain water, in this town of thatched roofs, had separated Ramón from the people. Ramón wanted a million things—a refrigerator, a larger house, a store-bought bed for the son he expected, and, not least, the respect of the middle-class storekeepers in Esmeraldas with whom he had done business all his life as just another undifferentiated shadow in the doorway, another beach *zambo.*

Ramón didn't want to be poor any more, and he was riding for a fall. The people had a growing contempt for his ambition and his aggressiveness, and he, a growing contempt for their lack of drive, their acceptance of the old ways. The time will come when he will have to find a middle-class environment where he can be at ease.

* * * * *

The corn failure

We stood there watching the dark rain clouds coming in from the ocean. For two months we had broken our hearts watching those damned clouds. For 60 days we had studied the sky and 60 times had said, "You know, it really looks like rain tonight. I think we'll get it tonight." The corn was gone; we had lost it. Maybe with luck we would harvest 50 sacks instead of the 500 we had planned on.

"Well," I said, "the rain won't help us now; it's too late for rain now."

"Yes," Orestes said. "Next year we'll have to plant earlier, don't you think?"

By the time the drought had finished off the crop, the co-op was in its death throes. Orestes, Ramón, and the Señora Vicenta stood like rocks of loyalty while everything crumbled around them.

Actually, it wasn't only the *socios* who were going through a panic; I was in a state of panic myself. I was really running scared. For over two years I had been organizing the co-op, getting land cleared, setting up pens for pigs and houses for chickens, and all of our success was predicated on at least 500 sacks of corn a year. I had gathered a group of people who trusted me, and I had promised them that if they changed their stone-age agriculture, I could show them how to dominate their poverty. "To lick this poverty you have to produce more than you can eat; you have to have production," I kept telling them. But the corn was dying; all the work had been for nothing; it looked as though I had simply burdened my friends with thousands of hours of senseless labor that would yield them nothing.

Leaning out my window one night in the darkness, I had heard Orestes talking about me with someone. "Oh, that Martín," he said. "He's *terrible.* You know, he's never told us a lie; he's really a serious type. I'd follow him right to hell." I had sneaked back into my bed and lay there staring out the window, shaken; I didn't feel up to the challenge of being considered infallible. I had been under cruel and terrible pressure for several months, ever since I had promised that a bulldozer would help clear our land. Now I felt drained and bankrupt, used up.

* * * * *

Peace Corps 'patrón'

To form a legal cooperative under Ecuadorian law, a minimum of 11 *socios* was required. Our cooperative had finally shrunk to four: Ramón, Orestes, Vicenta and Eloy. And the only reason Eloy stayed was that we were paying him to be storekeeper. This left Ramón, Orestes and the Señora Vicenta to do all the co-op work—grind corn for the chickens, cut grass, haul bananas and water for the 25 pigs, buy supplies for the store, repair the outboard motor, a million other things. There was no water in the

Moritz Thomsen, a farmer from the West Coast, joined the Peace Corps in 1964 when he was 48 years old. He served four years in Ecuador during which time he made the sensitive observations which now serve as the basis of his book, *Living Poor.* In writing, Thomsen refers to himself with the name his Ecuadorian friends used, Martín.

town. We gave the pigs water from the muddy lagoon on top of the hill until it went dry; after that we had to buy water from the kids who brought it down in canoes and then haul it in buckets a quarter of a mile up the hill to the pigpens.

Eloy was excused from all these chores. He worked from five in the morning until nine at night, slept on a grass mat on the floor among the piles of platanos and bananas, where he was available all night to sell single cigarettes or bottles of cola to people who couldn't sleep. We paid him $8 a month, and, being the only man in town with a job, he rapidly turned into Río Verde's man of distinction. The way he was gaining weight was terrifying; for probably the first time in his life he wasn't hungry. While we couldn't prove it, we knew why he was growing so fat and glossy; we didn't buy his wild tale that he was only eating the broken animal crackers. *Carajo,* nobody can gain five pounds a month on just animal crackers.

In a poor town the storekeeper is a man of power, and I watched in fascinated dismay as scrawny little Eloy bloomed with the power of his job. There were many stories in the town concerning which women had sold themselves to one of our competing storekeepers for enough groceries to keep their families, and on a more innocent level the same thing began to happen in our store. All the young girls in town suddenly fell in love with Eloy; some of them weren't so young. You could usually see a couple of them hanging around on the store steps saying cute things to Eloy and blinking their eyes ecstatically. Why not? Eloy was the kid with the Cokes, the chocolate, the crackers and the credit.

For three years I had been in more or less the same position as Eloy, but on a much larger scale, and for three years I had been obsessed with trying to define the realities of my position in the town. What *is* love? If it is the answering of one's needs, is it any less legitimate if those needs—grounded in hunger, disease and desperation—are centered on your strongest personality trait, the money you carry in your pocket?

This is one of the Peace Corps traps. It can be absolutely shattering to the ego to realize that it isn't your own inherent lovableness that has all the people in town wild with passion for you, but rather the $100 a month that makes you by far the richest and most powerful man in town, the new *patrón* whether you like it or not, and the only one who can in some measure solve the problems of their despair. Or even with a phrase, a "No, I haven't got any," condemn their fevered children to death.

As Peace Corps Volunteers we come to give of ourselves, but we are almost all a part of the Puritan ethic, and we make rules and set limits as to what we will give and on what terms, and what it is legitimate to ask of us. We want to be loved because we're lovable, not because we're rich gringos. But the people in the town don't know the rules. After six months, when they know that you're not there as a spy or to exploit them or to live apart from them, they claim you; they want to touch you, watch you when you eat, own you; they want to be Number One with you; they want you to solve their problems. They start twisting the relationship around trying to make a *patrón* out of you, and it takes another heartless year to convince most of them that you aren't a *patrón.*

Well, it had been a good many years since I had thought myself very lovable, and I escaped to some degree this trap of shattered ego. I was lucky; I had found a village of people so poor and simple, so engaging, that I had been more interested in my feelings for them than in what they thought of me. And frankly, after 18 years of farming in the Sacramento Valley, that terrible life-consuming rat race, I was desperate enough to accept almost any human relationship on almost any terms. Love is love, I decided. Just take it and don't analyze it away. "You're my friend; you're good; you give me pennies," some nameless kid from down the beach told me. My God, what is love in this whorehouse world of poverty? And was I shocked because I could buy love or because I could buy it with pennies?

As far as I could see, Eloy accepted his new position in the town with a minimum of inner conflicts. In a few months he turned from an anonymous kid into a self-satisfied, slightly arrogant, sleepy-eyed young man, well fleshed out, with fat, pouchy, chipmunk cheeks. He had beer parties for his friends in the store at night, and those of us outside could hear muffled laughter and watch thick clouds of cigarette smoke rolling out from under the locked door. The next day he would deduct a few bottles of beer and a few cigarettes from his wages, but we wondered how accurate he was.

He dressed in his best clothes and wore the only pair of shoes he owned, shoes which he had always saved for the days of fiesta. Studying Eloy in his new role was like watching a younger Alvaro, the paunchy, raunchy storekeeper down the street who hated us because he no longer fully dominated the town. I thought of one of the Peace Corps definitions of itself, "an agent of change," and shook my head helplessly. When you start bringing about change, you often wonder what you've set in

motion. I had been so anxious to get new money into the town, to get families earning more, that I had scarcely thought about the new problems that new money might bring.

I watched Eloy as he gradually lost his innocence, as that $8 a month put unbearable pressure on him and twisted his character. Each month the store made about $5 less, and we heard rumors that Eloy was making small loans to farmers at 40 per cent interest. He was a sharp kid; he learned fast. But I realized that his days as a *socio* were numbered, that when he lost his job in the store he would never go back to the menial labor of hacking out jungle with a machete on the co-op farm. He was much too grand for that.

* * * * *

Growing up poor

There was an insane quality to the poverty in the town, some black secret that lay just outside the mind's acceptance.

I began to be aware that in the town there was scarcely a moment when a baby's crying didn't fill the air, and there was a resemblance between the violence of the babies' furious raging cries and the violence of machetes slashing through flesh. Like a revelation, I suddenly realized that these screams were the screams of human beings learning about poverty. They were learning about sickness and about hunger; they were learning in a hard school what they could expect from life, learning to accept their destiny and the futility of revolting against it. They were being twisted and maimed. They were being turned from normal human beings into The Poor.

After the age of six they are ready for life, and as for being poor, they know all about it; there isn't a thing they don't know. There are no more tears. They play quietly, gravely in the dirt before their houses, and there is something terrible in their eyes, a kind of blindness. For years they will go without weeping, and then a strange thing happens. At about the age of 19 the boys discover the healing and magical release of alcohol, and until they are about 24 or 25 whenever they have the money they drink cane alcohol almost as a rite, seeking out the purging relief that comes in those few minutes just before unconsciousness when everything concentrates in a flashing, searing point—all the hopelessness, the misery, the stupid deprived past, and the stupid endless future. They want a pair of shoes or a little silver ring or a Japanese transistor radio or maybe just a pair of pants that isn't worn and patched. They want to go to the movies in Esmeraldas and sit in the sweet obliterating darkness with a bag of *caramelos* watching Hercules slaughtering the Romans. They want to get married. They want to get out of their father's house, away from the endless bickering.

"Oh, *puta,*" they yell in the street. "Oh, *la gran puta.*" "Oh, great whore," they yell. They are screaming at life in a paroxysm of rage, accusing life of cheating them. The tears gush out of their eyes, they roll on the ground, beating the ground with their fists, chewing the earth. "Oh, *puta.* Oh, PUTA. Oh, *Gran Puta,* LA GRAN PUTA!"

After about 26 all the revolt is burned out of them; by that time they are beginning to get old. They finally accept their destiny. Or, if they can't, I guess they take up their machetes and go out looking for it.

And this thing about the town that I had been afraid to think, the town's black, unspeakable secret? They mentioned it on a news broadcast one night, sandwiched in between the stories of wars and riots, announcing that 60 per cent of the world's children were suffering from protein starvation and that this deprivation in the first 5 years of life permanently and irrevocably destroyed up to 25 per cent of a man's intelligence.

Twenty-five per cent.

If 75 is the I.Q. in the town, what is the medical word that describes this poor, doomed people, this wasted human resource living out its unproductive destiny in the impregnable prison of a destroyed mind, in a twilight, idiot world where nothing really makes sense?

* * * * *

Devolution of the co-op

Things were getting rather psychotic. The co-op had only three practicing members. The ones who had dropped out, convinced that we would never have a success, were torn between their desire to slip back in as members and their desire to destroy the organization completely. They had expected that the loss of the corn crop would cause everything to fold up, but we kept going. In June we had a batch of baby pigs ready to sell, we were disking up the farm ground getting ready for the December rains, and the fields looked beautiful. We had 100 chickens just beginning to lay. Everything was still in a delicate state of balance: The egg money went to buy groceries for the store; the store money was all invested in concentrate for the pigs; and it was still six months until the rains would come. But it did look a little less hopeless. Alvarez hinted very delicately one day that he had never actually retired from the co-op and that he still considered himself a member. Orestes cut him off brutally.

"I've got 1,400 hours of work written down now. How many have you got? 150? 160? If you come back in, I'm getting out. I've been taking care of those pigs, hauling water, grinding corn for the chickens for the last six months. Where were you, Alvarez, *amigo*? You didn't show up once."

Ramón backed his brother. "The co-op's done," he said. "It's finished. We're not taking anybody back, not anybody. Look, I've let all my own work go just to keep the co-op going, but I wasn't doing it for a bunch of lazy people. I was doing it because Martín wanted it done that way, and I was doing it for my own future."

"When the gringo leaves," Alvaro told everyone who would listen to him, "everything will be owned by just those three; they'll own this town, practically. And they've done all this with everyone who ever helped in the cooperative." It was true. We had had 14 members at one time. The three of them alone could never have built the store, the chicken houses, and the pigpens, and cleared the land. But everyone had known that this could happen. We had made the rule at one of the first meetings: Anyone who retired from the cooperative would be paid two *sucres,* about ten cents, for each hour of work. This was the going rate for farm labor. And one of the main reasons for the co-op's difficulties had been the thousands of sucres that we had had to dig up to pay off the retiring members. We still owed almost $75 to a half-dozen former members who were beginning to harass us, telling us that if we were honest and sincere about paying them off we ought to sell the breeding stock. It would have meant the destruction of the co-op, which, of course, they realized. I vetoed the idea.

"What are you going to do with your tractor when you leave?" Don Julio asked me one day. "I'd like to make some arrangements with you."

"It's not my tractor," I told him. "I've said this a thousand times. It was never my tractor; it belongs to the coopera-

tive."

He looked at me as though I were putting him on. "And the outboard motor? That belongs to Point 4; I know you can't leave that here."

"Yes," I said, taking pleasure in his displeasure. "The motor is four years old; it has been written off the Point 4 books; it now belongs to the cooperative."

"And the farm?"

"And the farm."

Twenty people cornered me on the street that week. They wanted to know if it were true that Ramón, Orestes and Vicenta were going to be the owners of everything. "But of course," I said. "They're the co-op now, aren't they?" This prospect was depressing to everyone —even to the three *socios*, who began to realize just how delicate their situation had become.

We added up the assets of the cooperative one night. After subtracting debts of $1,000, we discovered that the organization was worth close to $6,000. With good management it could earn around $4,000 every year, figuring in the store, 300 chickens, and 6 sows. In the two years since we had contracted to buy the land its value had doubled, thanks to a local cotton boom. Every shopkeeper in Esmeraldes with a little capital was looking for the kind of acreage that the co-op owned.

* * * * *

Ramón's baby

I was in Las Palmas across the river the day that Ramón came back from Guayaquil with Ester and his month-old daughter. He had never thought of having a daughter; his mind had been full of the son he wanted—to be named Martín and to be sent to California at age 6 to live with me and speak only English and to come back to Ecuador at 21 as a doctor or a veterinarian. Now he came to the house proudly triumphant and introduced me to Martita; it was as close to Martín as he could get, and the memory of that son had already left his mind.

Normally, month-old babies are not my cup of tea; they are too breakable. But Ramón's Martita was something else. She had a face so broad and fat, cheeks so chipmunk pouchy, and skin so flawlessly beautiful that I couldn't resist her. I was moved to cries of admiration by the close resemblance to both Ramón and Ester, this only intimation of immortality.

Ester, whom I hadn't seen for six weeks, was completely changed, her youthful beauty gone forever, as though she had presented it as a gift to her child. She was much stockier, the young matron, her face serious and full of different thoughts. I asked her why she looked so different, and she smiled shyly to show me her teeth. She told me that the doctor had made her have six teeth pulled before the baby was born. She had a plate now, and all the gaps in her mouth were gleaming white, but it was strange how she had aged.

Since the last eight babies in town had died at birth or shortly afterward, I was terrified to see them heading back to Río Verde. I was full of advice, admonitions, worryings. For years the jealous town had referred to Ramón as *su hijo*, your son, and now I realized it was true that an inconsiderate son had made me a grandfather. But they had become serious people, they told me. They boiled all their water, and they were going to boil all the baby's dishes; they had a schedule of vaccinations; they had a baby bed, special blankets, mosquito netting, and a paper in the doctor's hand which explained the first year's diet. They had even bought an iron, an essential item the doctor had insisted, for sterilizing diapers and killing the little *garrapatas* that survived a washing. I rushed down to the Catholic bookstore for a couple of books on child care and told Ester to memorize them. (These soon became best sellers in Río Verde.)

Ramón came back from Río Verde 10 days later and told me with glee how the town had reacted to his child. They had been thunderstruck by the baby blankets and the bed. The weight of the child, her violent health and vigor, had appalled them. Ramón was the first man on the whole stretch of beach who had ever sent his wife away to have a child. He had spent 3,000 *sucres* on the doctor, the hospital, the dentist, and the babies accouterments, a sum that had actually about put him into bankruptcy, but the stunning effect when he mentioned this sum in the street made it worth every *sucre* to him. A baby in Río Verde cost 50 *sucres* for a midwife and a couple of hundred *sucres* more invested in a bunch of chickens to feed the bedridden mother. Ramón's triumph was somewhat spoiled by the town's insistence that I had paid all the bills, but actually, aside from a small contribution to help

him buy the baby's bed, I had done nothing.

* * * * *

Maybe some would change

There wasn't much time left; in three months my contract would expire. Six or eight months earlier I would have found the idea quite terrifying; now I accepted it with an equanimity that really irritated Ramón and Orestes. There wasn't time to start anything new, nor did I have any new ideas or any enthusiasm to begin working outside the cooperative.

I made out a list of 20 things that had to be done in the co-op before the rains started, and they were final things that, when completed, would make an operational entity out of the organization. And we even did some of them in those last few weeks. We replastered the cement water-storage tank that I had made the year before, built a wooden top for it to keep the turkeys from jumping into the water—or, just as bad, standing on the sides facing out with their rear ends facing in. We roofed the sows' farrowing house with palm leaves and pieces of balsa, built wooden gutters to catch rain water, began to build a wooden form for the new cement water tank at the pig house, and disked up most of the farmland again.

Except for two or three things, the final months rushed past in the usual tranquil way.

Then at one point Orestes told me: "Ramón and I have talked this all over," he said. "We will stay here for one more year, plant and harvest one more crop, and then we want to leave the town."

"What about all your work here?" I asked him.

"That's what we want to talk about," Orestes said.

"What about you, Vicenta? Are you committed to the town?"

"But no one is committed to the town," Vicenta said. "We are prisoners of our poverty. There's no one in town, except perhaps Don Julio, who wouldn't leave if he could."

"You'd like to leave then if you could?"

"If it is God's will, yes, I would like to leave the town."

"Well, then," I said, "let's figure out how to do it."

"Don Enrique feels," Orestes said, "that if this tremendous interest in cotton continues for another year we would have no trouble selling the farm and the tractor. Don Enrique has talked to many people in Esmeraldas; everyone is looking for cotton ground."

"And we could take this money," Ramón said, "and buy a small farm on the Esmeraldas River with pigpens near the river with clear water by the pens always. Water for the house, for the chickens, clean water to wash in. A man would have a chance there."

"Do you want to do it together as a *cooperativa*?" I asked.

"For God's sake, Martín," Ramón said, while Vicenta sadly shook her head and Orestes violently shook his.

"Did Enrique say how much he thought you could get?"

"We mentioned the 140,000 *sucres* that you said the farm was worth, and he said that that was cheap."

It would mean after prorating their hours of work that both Ramón and Orestes would have $2,500 apiece and Vicenta about $2,000. "Would 40,000 *sucres*," I asked Vicenta, "be enough to begin a new life in a new place?"

"But that is a richness beyond comprehension," she said. "Who has ever had this much to start a farm?"

"Well, then, why not keep working together for one more crop year?" I asked them. "And after that if you still want to dissolve the cooperative or if the rains don't come again, do it. I agree that Río Verde is a hard place, and I don't think it will be here in another 10 years. But don't sell it suddenly, accepting the first offer that comes along. Start now to find a buyer."

We talked for another half hour. Aladino, to whom we still owed $6, wanted to know if we could pay him so he could leave town. It was almost more than we had, but we sent Vicenta down to the store to rob store funds. Pancho had something on his mind, but he didn't speak until the meeting was breaking up.

Pancho was a delicate and unknown factor at this point. Earlier we had been very good friends, but a couple of years before I had had to take two Heifer pigs away from him, and he was just beginning to be easy with me again. Gradually, Pancho and Ramón had become friendly again, to the point, even, that they were talking about farming a little piece of Ramón's ground together as partners. Two men working together as partners; it was incredible.

Pancho stood at the top of the stairs as everyone was leaving. "You know," he said sadly, "a co-op would work. If you could teach them patience, if the people were serious, if you could find honest leaders. If you could explain the need for direction. . . . Well, good night, sleep with the angels."

It took me a couple of days to figure out what he meant. He had never been in the cooperative, had always stood apart, watching it and scoffing, and it was difficult for me to take seriously his sadness at seeing the co-op die. I talked to Orestes. The more I thought about selling the farm to one man, the less satisfactory it seemed. Just another *patrón* for the village and the village hiring out to him as day laborers.

"But Pancho isn't serious," Orestes insisted. "Pancho will never work with others."

"He's talking about working with Ramón," I said. "Could you have imagined that two years ago? And anyway, if not Pancho, maybe somebody. And if not Pancho now, then maybe Pancho later."

"Well, do what you want," Orestes said. "You know we trust you all the way. But my God, you are innocent; you're like a little child who thinks everyone is good. Haven't you learned yet what the town is like?"

I didn't answer him, but I guess I could have, saying that the town was just people and that the people changed. "Look," I could have said, "how you and Ramón have changed. And now maybe, just maybe, Pancho is changing." And one by one, maybe, maybe, little by little, people would change.

It was the last day; I was all packed. The tide was beginning to ebb, and the truck across the river was honking its horn, getting ready to get ready to leave. I climbed the hill for the last time with Ramón for a last cup of coffee and to say good-by to Ester. Ramón was just completing a new house which sat on the top of the hill at the edge of the co-op farm. It had a tremendous view of the town and the beach and the river and the shrimp boats slowly moving across a thousand miles of ocean. He was going to make the front of his house of boards so that the whole town, every time it looked toward the hill, would see his wooden house, the only one in 30 miles.

So I drank the coffee, and Ramón told Martita, six months old by then, to say good-by, pretending outrage because she was smiling, and then I said good-by to Ester, and everything was under control, everything like a dream. But as I stepped down off the porch to leave, Ester screamed, and I turned to see her, her face contorted and the tears streaming down her cheeks. We hugged each other, and Ramón rushed from the house and stood on the brow of the hill looking down intently into the town.

Letters
to the Volunteer

Applauds Tanzania story

To THE VOLUNTEER:

After reading "No room for PC" (September VOLUNTEER), I must congratulate you for allowing a returned Volunteer to learn the truth about the trend in Peace Corps. I, for one, am glad that Tanzania is kicking out the Peace Corps if Peace Corps couldn't work within the structure.

I have no doubt that the Peace Corps is going "establishment" mighty fast. How long we can be allowed to read such frank, critical articles as that by Ron Hert remains to be seen.

MILDRED COWGER
Former Volunteer

Scio, Ore.

Cause for regret

To THE VOLUNTEER:

Ron Hert's exposition of what went wrong in Tanzania (September VOLUNTEER) contains some clues to the truth.

At one point he identifies two "deeply damaging" attitudes within Peace Corps: separatism (the opposite of binationalism), and the "lethal", "do it like a Volunteer" viewpoint. Then he refers to these two attitudes as "intricately interwoven."

In fact, they are opposites and incompatible, for "do it like a Volunteer" means do it with respect and concern for the others' values; it means the deepest possible involvement with the widest possible slice of the host community; it means don't be afraid to get your hands dirty even if you are a teacher. Wherever in Peace Corps these attitudes prevail, there is an inevitable meshing with the host infrastructure.

At another point Hert says Tanzania needs technical aid, so "doing it like a Volunteer will just not suffice there any longer"—as if these two concepts were opposite and incompatible! In fact *they are* intricately interwoven, because technical skill is of lasting value only when it is transmitted, and transmission requires concern for the others' values, involvement and humility—or doing it like a Volunteer.

My own view is that Tanzania and Peace Corps might have been perfectly mated, and that our failure to communicate in Tanzania what we are and what we value is an almost unbearable tragedy.

The clues, then, point to a conclusion that staff and Volunteers might have thought sooner and harder and longer about what "doing it like a Volunteer" required of them in Tanzania. At critical times, key members of the staff were purblind, insensitive and complacent. But there is cause for regret, too, on the part of all those who wasted precious time thinking up reasons for not doing it like Volunteers.

WARD HOWER
Office of Evaluation

Washington, D.C.

Lesson of Tanzania

To THE VOLUNTEER:

I would like to extend my thanks to Ron Hert for his excellent article (September VOLUNTEER). It was easily the most profound, professional and relevant piece to appear in THE VOLUNTEER in my four years of reading.

The only question is whether the Peace Corps hierarchy will mature in its decision making so that an ideal country for a Peace Corps experience and contribution doesn't again become an unfortunate part of its past.

LORENZO C. ARATO

Brooklyn, N.Y.

Risk must be theirs

To THE VOLUNTEER:

In reply to Charles Ryan's letter (September VOLUNTEER): He bemoans the fact that, seemingly, most Peace Corps aid goes to the middle and upper sectors of the rural population, leaving those most in need of aid little better off than before.

First of all, Peace Corps is not a material giving but an instruction giving organization. People who want help and who want to improve their lot must take all the initiative and risk themselves. If a man does not want to gamble on new methods, there is nothing that Peace Corps can do for him.

Using what we have learned in the past, we can lessen the plight of the little man, but growth and change will squeeze out those who will not follow along. Thus, the "blame" for the apparent disparity in aid we give cannot be laid at the feet of the Peace Corps.

JOHN MCCLURKIN

Baliva, Nepal

Abandoning the poor

To THE VOLUNTEER:

A letter from Charles Ryan (September VOLUNTEER) expressed a sense of disappointment or bewilderment in discussing who are the recipients of Peace Corps programs. Much of what he said is applicable to Korea as well. The marginal technical assistance which the Peace Corps can offer—like most other foreign assistance agencies—fails to reach those who have the greatest need for it.

Some Volunteers here are assigned to the best colleges in the country and, at least in the past, certain assignments smacked of favoritism. At these colleges Volunteers are teaching English to students of wealthy families who don't appear to display even token concern for the social conditions of their less fortunate countrymen.

The only rural program in the country is being modified so that Volunteers in the next program will be going to "less remote" sites. Then, to top it off, there was talk some time ago about fulfilling a request for professors in business administration so that the banks, insurance companies, and those able to make the fat investment can secure larger profits more quickly.

I agree with Mr. Ryan that the technical assistance which Peace Corps provides should be directed to

the poor instead of the not-so-poor, but I think there is a still greater misfortune in these circumstances. The redirection of Peace Corps efforts in this country and others has cost the Peace Corps its identification with the needy—hence its credibility and any purpose at all of serving in developing nations—and this fact in the end will prove fatal to Peace Corps' existence.

Pictures and text in the Peace Corps handbook to the contrary, the Peace Corps here will soon be identified with the sports in the cities, and the poor in the remote regions will have been abandoned by yet one more assistance agency. In the long run, perhaps the poor will be better off without us anyway.

FRED TOOMEY

Inje Gun, Korea

Space communication

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

Been in Peace Corps almost one year now. Times of deep depression when Voice of America broadcasts in "Special English" of shootings, kids being beaten in the street, the death of Uncle Ho.

But other moments . . . when smiling bronze-black faces say "Teacha, I love you" . . . freedom to work hard in a lush green tropical paradise . . . a new football, a piece of candy, an old tin can or just a smile . . . all special occasions here. Read "strange" letters in THE VOLUNTEER obviously written by men from Mars.

MIKE AND CHERYL VANDEVEER

Sarbo-Sweake, Liberia

Recruiting 'over 40s'

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

I am one of the "older Volunteers" and I think it is great that Peace Corps Washington has finally decided to do some serious recruiting of people other than young college graduates. There are several of us "over 40" people here in Afghanistan and all of us are thoroughly enjoying our work. We are past the age where we have to be so deeply concerned with raising a family and with financial obligations. Now we can help other people who are—in a larger sense—our family.

IDAVONNE ROSA

Kabul, Afghanistan

Another poll, Mr. Harris

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

I was struck with the accuracy of the feelings of college seniors towards the Peace Corps (September VOLUNTEER).

I agree fully with the views presented by the Harris poll. I do feel, however, that the bureaucracy of the Peace Corps organization is not as difficult to cut through as that of the host country.

Why doesn't Mr. Harris conduct a poll of Volunteers to ascertain the changes that they'd like to see made?

MARY MYERS

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Five years later

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

Presently, I am director of cooperative education at Mary Holmes College in Mississippi. Five years ago, I was training for a Peace Corps assignment in Liberia. In 1964, the black awareness movement in no way approached the momentum and interest which exists today, and very few of the Negroes (Negro was all right then) in the group considered that going to Africa would put them in touch with the Mother Country. Rather, we had the same ideas—missionary ones, among others—as our white counterparts.

We thought that in Africa, however, because we were of African descent, we would be received more positively than white Volunteers, but I do not believe any one of us seriously considered remaining there. Perhaps, too, there were guilt feelings about spending two valuable years in Liberia when we could have been more useful in Alabama or Mississippi.

Some of us had participated in the civil rights movement when integration was the password and only Malcolm X and others like him preached separation. Secretly, perhaps, we may have admired him, but we rarely discussed, if ever, the activities of Malcolm X or those of Marcus Garvey. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Roy Wilkins were our heroes, and "I have a dream" was our slogan.

In Liberia, we were received very positively, but no one met us at Monrovia's Roberts International Airport with bouquets or champagne. But I was impressed and I guess a little frightened at the sea of black faces, which included government officials, probably all Americo-Liberians, who happened to be at the airport.

I was assigned to the Pleebo High School as a general mathematics teacher and a teacher of history (American and Liberian). Many students were usually blunt and asked me how I thought I could help them and teach about freedom and democracy when I did not enjoy such privileges in Alabama. This was a good question, for I knew very painfully that their implication was so true. I thought about this question for a long time, and the murder of Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael's cry for "black power" did not make my thinking any easier. Several times I considered returning home before my two-year stint was completed. I have asked myself many times why I did not. I still do not have a good answer.

I have reflected a great deal on the two years that I spent in Liberia and would not, I am sure, considering present day events, volunteer for service now. But this is 1969, not 1964.

Perhaps I needed that time to look at my country from a distance, to consider seriously, for perhaps the first time in my life, what it really means to be an American, a black American. I must have sounded pretty silly to my Liberian students when I discussed freedom, democracy and human rights so passionately. They must have felt that I was deceiving myself; at the time I had no such feeling. But how wisely that money used to train and sustain me for 25 months could have been put to better purposes in the shack town area of Tuscaloosa, Ala., my home town.

I cannot help but believe that the Peace Corps is on its way out—for America's youth the home ground is where the action is. Saving somebody else when we do not seem capable of saving ourselves strikes a great number of young Americans as ludicrous.

In 1964, the action was here, too; but I, like many of my peers, ran away from it. We are here to stay now—for until we put our own house in order, we ought to stay the hell out of somebody else's.

CARL MEACHAM
Former Volunteer

West Point, Miss.

Moving and storage

To THE VOLUNTEER:

My wife and I had been married and settled in our own apartment for about a year before we entered Peace Corps in Nigeria. Therefore, we had to arrange to put our furniture in storage. When we returned, we found we owed $600 for storage and moving charges.

We think it would be more equitable and help attract somewhat older people if Peace Corps would assume the burden of storing household belongings during the term of service.

PETER BROWNRIGG
Former Volunteer

Dundalk, Md.

The machine age

To THE VOLUNTEER:

A few weeks ago I received a letter signed, perhaps, by a machine stating that the Peace Corps was unable to find "an appropriate placement" for me. The letter did not give any real reasons for this; I assumed and still assume that I am generally qualified for Peace Corps service.

Thus, lacking any specific reasons for my rejection and knowing of several other friends who got the same unimaginative form letter, I must conclude (since I applied reasonably early in the year) that the Peace Corps simply does not have room for qualified young people.

This seems to be borne out in the statements of the new Nixon-type director. I wish you luck in attracting the settled but idealistic, middle-aged United Auto Worker types whom you seem to think are ready to join the battle for mankind. I hope the people of the Third World really appreciate their hard-headed nuts and bolts advice on how to build a glowing plastic 20-cent hamburger culture like the one we have already achieved. I hope the Peace Corps budget cuts to which you acquiesced serve notice to the indigent poor of the world that the Nixon Administration (including you) plans to allow them the dignity of self-help (starving like men) while it sits on that portion of its 45 per cent of the world's wealth which it is not using for violent population reduction.

I notice that there are still Peace Corps recruiters visiting college campuses trying to get idealistic students to join up. I know what I'll tell stu-

Memorandum

TO : The field
FROM : The editors
SUBJECT: Those who try harder

DATE: December, 1969

This month's Avis award goes to Volunteers Phyllis and Henry Farrar. They met as India-bound trainees in October, 1968—the Development and Research Corporation was their matchmaker—and were married three months later in New Delhi after in-country training. Assigned to West Bengal, Phyllis made the rounds with her counterpart, a home visitor, while Henry worked in the rice fields. Things came a bit unglued in West Bengal, though, and Volunteers were given a chance to switch programs. Phyllis and Henry decided they'd like a fresh start. They chose Libya TEFL, and early this year were off to Bisbee, Ariz., for training. Then came the coup, out went the king, and the Farrars started looking at recruiting brochures again. When last seen, they had their eyes on the TEFL program in Afghanistan.

Chuck Amorosino says the Filipino family he lived with during Peace Corps service paid no attention when, upon termination in 1967, he told them: "I shall return." They weren't listening, but were planning instead to follow Chuck to Boston. His foster mother, Mrs. Isabel Ruazol, was a widow with two children, Erwin, now 16, and Arlene, now 12. More than two years after their "village science teacher" came back to the U.S., Mrs. Ruazol and Arlene (at right of Chuck in picture) and two friends landed in Boston with emigrant visas and one-way tickets. Chuck couldn't help but ask the party where they would live, work and attend school. For awhile, the ladies wound up in Chuck's Boston bachelor apartment which Mrs. Ruazol ran Filipino style with daily jaunts to the supermarket. It seems only fair that Chuck, now a Peace Corps recruiter, opened up his home to them. He recalls that when he arrived in Cavinti, Laguna, Philippines in 1965 and tried to make living arrangements with the Ruazol family, the mother didn't like the idea of having an American man in her house, especially from what she had seen in the movies. Neighbors helped persuade her to take Chuck in. As time went on, he was adopted as the oldest son and shared in the family responsibilities. The ladies who accompanied Mrs. Ruazol to Boston now live with a Filipino friend of Chuck's and work with an insurance firm. Mrs. Ruazol, who holds a master's degree, has a job with a Boston bank. She and Arlene live with an American family two blocks from Arlene's school. With "settling in" accomplished, Chuck proudly makes his rounds in "area rep" style to see that members of his strong-willed family are adjusting and enjoying their new life. He has a few months left to prepare for the arrival of brother Erwin who is finishing up his last year of high school in Manila.

dents—I'll tell them not to bother. The real fight's going to be right here at home.

GREG VOELM

Galion, Ohio

Challenges new directions

TO THE VOLUNTEER:

I have been reading between the lines of the questionnaire sent out by Director Joe Blatchford to sample returned Volunteer sentiment on some of his ideas for future Peace Corps policy. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that his major proposals, if implemented, will so change the character of the Peace Corps as to nullify many of its gains around the world, render it less attractive to the best kind of potential Volunteer, and turn it into an agency which does little more than duplicate efforts already being pursued by existing government agencies such as A.I.D. and private industrial and commercial interests. For example:

Blatchford says we should "enable Volunteers to combine service overseas and at home in the same or related skill areas." What he apparently has in mind is that Peace Corps Volunteers experienced in working among culturally deprived peoples in other lands should devote part of their Peace Corps service to stateside duty supplementing VISTA volunteer efforts in the domestic poverty program. There is already a tendency for our country to rely too much on VISTA to tackle problems which are beyond its competence and resources; the infusion of more (and essentially temporary) Peace Corps workers into this effort will tempt our legislators to go on merely scratching the surface in caring for and rehabilitating America's poor people.

The director says we should promote and enable "participation in the Peace Corps of volunteers from all segments of American society," institute programs of varying time periods "such as one year," increase living allowances "to attract more technically competent and experienced people to the Peace Corps," and "increase technical assistance activity and divert it more effectively toward the priorities of host country government." This is nonsense—and here's why:

The Peace Corps service has always been open to people from 18 to 80, no matter what "segment" of society they represent, as long as there were jobs that these persons could do and they were otherwise physically and psychologically fit for a cross-cultural experience. The hooker has been that such people must be willing to dispense with many of the comforts they now enjoy. We have learned that the willingness of Volunteers to condescend to "live like the people" in host countries has not had much of a public relations impact in these countries, and (let us admit it) it has only rarely been the case anyway. But it has had the effect of keeping the organization tough and spare and it has kept a maximum number of Volunteers functioning in the field.

To change these policies now would have the effect of reducing the number of effective Volunteers (because most of the budget would go to support non-contributing wives and children) and removing Volunteers from the realm of the masses of people in host countries (because more comfortably situated and family oriented Volunteers would not associate with them).

A happy advantage of the present system has been that Volunteers operating almost alone in the hinterlands have been able to avoid getting embroiled in local politics, with its attendant delays and other entanglements. The proposal to attune Peace Corps efforts more closely to "the priorities of host country governments" would wipe out this advantage by making the Peace Corps Volunteer an arm of any of a number of national and local governmental establishments which are notorious for their feuding and their inaction.

Let us admit that there are many needs in the host countries that the Peace Corps has not met—and probably cannot meet, constituted as it now is. But a properly funded and revitalized A.I.D. program probably can address itself to these problems, and so can enlightened potential investors and industrial and commercial developers, be they American, foreign or indigenous interests. Many returned Peace Corps Volunteers would jump at the chance to assist in these efforts. Internationalism, once imbibed in a Peace Corps experience, stays in the blood like a stubborn disease.

But the Peace Corps is, and should remain, an organization made up predominantly of young people or people of any age who are young at heart and retain vigorous physical, mental and psychological constitutions. Spartan subsistence allowances and other factors of the Volunteer's standard of living should be retained because they maximize effectiveness. The independence of the organization and of the individual Volunteers is an advantage not to be sacrificed at any price, and the concept of voluntarism should not be eroded in the face of the temptation to make the Peace Corps all things to all people.

ROBERT D. JAEHNIG
Former Volunteer

Pittsburgh, Pa.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Name

Street or P.O. Box

City, State, ZIP Code

Effective date

Mailing label at right must be sent with all requests for changes of address.

PEACE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20525

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

POSTAGE AND FEES PAID
PEACE CORPS